

Craters of the Moon

National Park Service
Bureau of Land Management
U.S. Department of the Interior

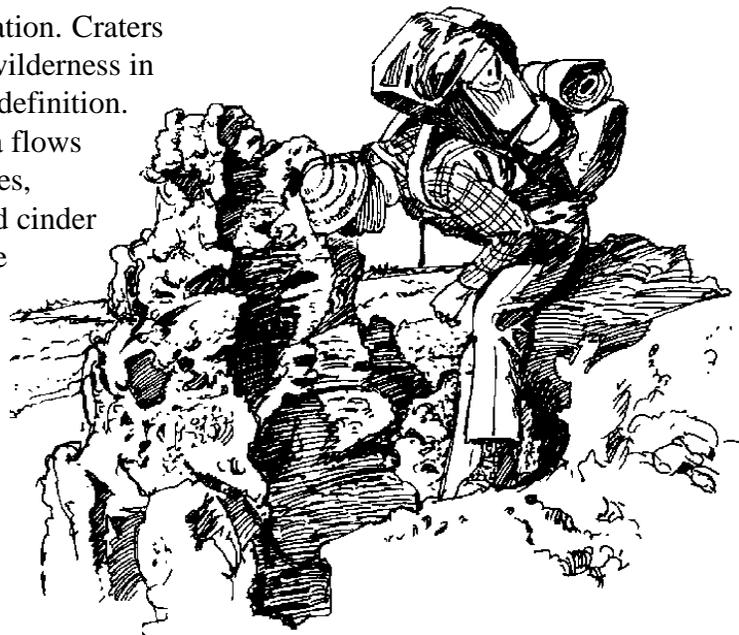
Craters of the Moon National
Monument and Preserve



Using the Wilderness

Most visitors to Craters of the Moon see the Monument from their car and the short hiking trails along the Loop Road. Doing so acquaints them with only 1% of the Monument. The remaining 750,000 acres are seldom visited, yet there are few places in America where wilderness is so easily accessible. The Wilderness Act of 1964 defined wilderness as “an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.” The Act recognized that wilderness provides outstanding opportunities for solitude and a

primitive type of recreation. Craters of the Moon contains wilderness in the truest sense of this definition. It is a vast plain of lava flows dotted with spatter cones, fissures, lava tubes, and cinder cones. Visitors have the sense of being truly alone while exploring the seemingly endless volcanic terrain along the Great Rift.



Along the Trail

The Wilderness Trail covers a total one-way distance of four miles from the Tree Molds parking lot to the Sentinel. Most backpackers spend the night at Echo Crater, three and one-half miles from the trailhead, but there are also camping opportunities at the Sentinel and beyond.

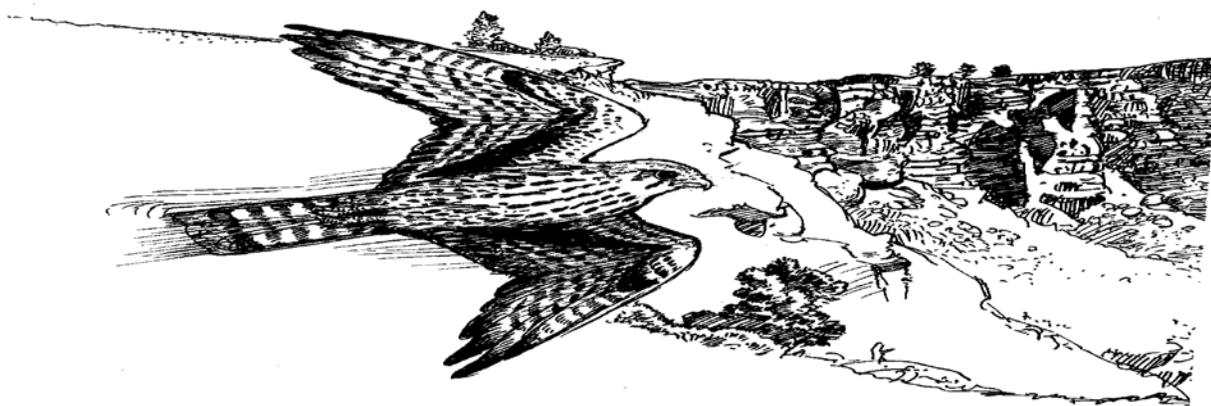
Begin at the Tree Molds parking lot. Walk back along the sidewalk approximately 75 yards to the Broken Top trailhead. Turn right to follow the Wilderness Trail directly across the young lava along the southern edge of Broken Top cinder cone. (A scenic alternative route on the way to or from the wilderness is available following the Broken Top Loop trail along the forested northern part of the cone.) Follow

the cairns over the lava to reach the entrance of Buffalo Cave, designated by sign #8. In the cave wear a helmet or hat to protect your head and carry a flashlight. It is not wise to enter caves alone.

The trail continues southeast past Big Cinder Butte, which rises 700 feet above the surface. A half mile beyond Big Cinder, look for a series of lava trees and fissures west of the trail. The trail winds between Coyote and Crescent Buttes to Echo Crater. There is no obvious trail into Echo Crater. The easiest approach is from the north side. Veer to the east through the sage brush and enter the crater from the gently sloping eastern approach. This vast crater offers protection from the sun and wind and lovely camping spot

near large rocks and stands of limber pines.

The hiking trail becomes less distinct beyond Echo Crater, but can be followed as far as the Sentinel, where it disappears altogether. Cross-country travel is possible beyond that point; however, dense shrubs and uneven lava make the going slow and sometimes unpleasant. Long pants offer protection from the coarse vegetation.



Minimum Impact Camping

In order to restrict human impact to a limited area, please camp at Echo Crater. If using other campsites, do so for only one night and then move on. Strive to leave no trace of your presence. Pack out all trash, including human waste. Do not move large rocks, logs, or other objects at your campsites. If you clear the ground to create a smooth sleeping surface, return it as closely as possible to its original condition. Try not to trample plants at your campsites or when hiking cross-country. Using care during your visit will leave the wilderness in pristine condition for the next visitor.

Safety

There are dangers inherent in the volcanic terrain. The lava is uneven and sharp. Cuts and abrasions from falling on the lava are the most common injuries at Craters of the Moon. Wear sturdy shoes and watch your step, especially when traveling off-trail.

Summer weather is hot, dry, and windy. Temperatures may reach the high 90s and afternoon winds of 15 to 30 miles per hour are common. There is no reliable surface water in the wilderness. Carry at least a gallon of water per person per day. There is little shade along the trail, so sunscreen and a hat are a necessity.

Regulations

- A free permit is required for overnight trips into the backcountry and can be obtained at the visitor center. This enables the National Park Service to monitor how many people are using the wilderness, to inform wilderness users of regulations, and to ensure the safe return of all visitors.

- Pets are not permitted in the wilderness.

- No wood fires. Use backpacking stoves for cooking.

- Bicycles and other mechanized equipment are not allowed.

